Special Issue on the Laird Nomination

Do We Want A Secretary of Defense With Views Like These?

"Step One of a military strategy of initiative should be the credible announcement of our determination to strike first if necessary to protect our vital interests. Step Two should be to explore the use of limited nuclear reprisals, to learn how this can be combined with coherent diplomacy. . . . It is obvious that willingness to undertake nuclear reprisals will be imperative if we enter the initial part of Phase Four where the United States and the Soviet Union each have a devastating strikeback capability."

—*Melvin Laird in his book on* America's Strategy Gap

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A Goldwater to Head the Pentagon

As show business, Nixon's introduction of his Cabinet was shallow and banal. He himself seemed like a bush league Ed Sullivan. No less than 10 times the TV audience was assured that there was some mysterious "extra dimension" enveloping what seemed to be a random assortment of the kind of business men to be met at any Rotary Club luncheon; the only extra dimension visible in their records was the size of their bank accounts. This is another Cabinet of millionaires. At first glance the weakest appointment was Nixon's law partner John Mitchell to be Attorney General. At a time when that office requires the deepest insights, we get an Attorney General who has spent his professional career as a municipal bond expert! The best appointment was that of William P. Rogers to be Secretary of State; the most alarming, that of Melvin R. Laird to be Secretary of Defense. Unfortunately Rogers, who was a first-rate Attorney General under Eisenhower and gave us some of the best Federal judges ever to sit in the South, knows next to nothing about foreign affairs while Laird is all too well equipped to be effective at the Pentagon in terms of his own outlook. He is a more competent and less open Goldwater. The prize in the Nixon package has gone to the military-industrial complex.

The No. 1 Task of The Pro-Peace Bloc

We believe it the duty of the pro-peace Senators to fight confirmation when Laird's name comes before the Senate. A President has a right to pick his Cabinet, but the constitutional requirement for Senate confirmation becomes meaningless if treated as a formality. When Senator McCarthy was awarded the annual Eleanor Roosevelt Peace prize Dec. 7 by the National Committee for A Sane Nuclear Policy, he stressed the need for the Senate to play a firmer role in foreign policy during the next four years. He called for, "More vigorous examination of the views of nominees, especially for those offices that effect foreign policy such as Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense." We look to him for leadership in giving the country a full view of Laird's record and writings in the confirmation hearings and in the debate. Ordinarily nominees for Secretary of Defense go to the Armed Services Committee. This is stacked with Senators who share the military viewpoint; the only maverick on it last session was Young of Ohio. There is no reason why the Foreign Relations Committee should not ask to examine Laird, too. In practice the Secretary of Defense often has more influence on foreign policy than the Secretary of State. On two of the major issues discussed by McCarthy, Laird sides with the military. One is the maintenance of nuclear "superiority" which means an endless, sky's-the-limit arms race; the other, the building of an anti-ballistic missile system. If McCarthy means to lead the fight on these issues, the fight ought to begin with the Laird appointment.

Laird Sees Us Already Locked In Global War

"We are now locked in a real war, joined in mortal combat on the battlefield, each contender maneuvering for advantage—as frankly as Napoleon at Waterloo or Lee at Gettysburg, only on a scale a thousand times magnified. Our own war, its battlefield and its maneuvers for advantage, is not of merely geographical dimensions as at Waterloo and Gettysburg. This is war of technology, a battlefield of research and maneuvers in these areas for break-throughs. The Soviets will use every trick and strategem to beguile us into sacrificing our time and efforts to hopes of disarmament. If meanwhile they achieve their own break-through in advanced or space weapons, they will revise their strategy; and instead of being confronted by so-called 'wars of national liberation', the world will face all-out nuclear terror, a situation from which our own nuclear capability will have been eliminated."

—A House Divided: America's Strategy Gap *by Laird*

Nixon has tried to create the image of a non-ideological Cabinet; he has called his Cabinet "pragmatic centrists." The man he would put in the Pentagon is no centrist. His legislative score for 1967 was rated at 100% by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 85% by the conservative Americans for Constitutional Action and 7% by Americans for Democratic Action; he is liberal on health legislation. "A steely and shrewd politician . . . at the center of our largest conservative apparatus," was the summation of the National Committee for An Effective Congress. Neither is Laird a pragmatist. I was wrong last week in saying that he would be as surprised to be called a practitioner of geopolitics as Babbitt would have been to be called a guru. This small town Wisconsin lumber dealer is quite at home with the swamis of the cold war. His one book, "A House Divided: America's Security Gap" (Henry Regnery: 1962) warms up to a climax in which he calls Christianity and communism irreconcilable but says "positivism, not communism, is the philosophical virus that causes our paralysis." In his native Marshfield, Wis., just using such words in public would be enough to mark a man down as suspect. "It is a profound lesson of history," Laird writes in a peroration worthy of his fellow Presbyterian,

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John Foster Dulles, one of Laird's heroes, "that as any nation increases its dedication to materialistic, positivistic criteria at the expense of dependence upon God and the truths beyond history, that nation has begun its downward course." This deep-seated opposition to materialism does not keep Laird from worrying about "the present profit squeeze" nor from suggesting as mandatory "a major overhaul of the tax system", by which he means a shift from income to more direct taxes, i.e. from the rich to the poor, who are presumably better adapted to a less materialistic way of life.

Better Dead Than Red

The book carries a modest acknowledgment "for able editorial and stylistic assistance" to Karl Hess, who surfaced to fame two years later as Goldwater's ghost writer. The "strategy gap" the book seeks to fill is the lack of an offensive posture. The book suggests that the U.S. take the initiative, among other places (1) in ridding Cuba of communism (2) in any future East German or Hungarian uprising and (3) in effecting "the unification of Germany." A Pentagon chief with such aims will rarely have a dull moment. These are high-wire examples of the brinkmanship Laird so admires in Dulles. The basic axiom of the book is "better dead than Red," though expressed in the fruitiest and most full-bodied Goldwaterite prose. "Is the fact that more lives are involved in decisions today," Laird asks in sententious reference to nuclear war, "sufficient in itself to make the condition of life [i.e. liberty] second to the primacy of biological preservation." The answer in the finest tradition of extremism in the defense of liberty, is "no." This overreadiness for the ultimate sacrifice was considered too dangerous for the White House in 1964. It would be no less dangerous in the Pentagon today.

At his Pentagon press conference Friday, December 13* when a reporter asked, "May I read some of your words back to you from your book?" Laird replied "I was afraid someone might do that." The words read back to him were that "the credible announcement of first-strike initiative is the sole way to effective disarmament discussions with the Soviet Union." Laird claimed this was the thesis not only of his book but of a report concurred in six years ago by all the members of the House Defense Appropriations subcommittee on which he has served since 1953. He said that was "written in a period of confrontation. We are now in a period of negotiations, and I think that that should be considered as we face the future." Laird doesn't seem to be facing the future very differently now than then. The ability, if necessary, to take the nuclear initiative and strike first is implicit in the insistence on nuclear "superiority" which is a central theme not only of the book but of Laird's major expositions of defense policy since and indeed of the Nixon campaign. The Nixon task force report on National Security made the maintenance of nuclear superiority its main recommendation. It assailed "the euphoric hope" that peace could be reached by replacing superiority with parity. It said the U.S. "must be prepared to crush all

*** In his book (p. 134) Laird cites as an example of Khrushchev's "mastery of the psychological techniques of political warfare" his "announcement that a 50-megaton bomb would be set off on Halloween eve." He thus became the first American statesman to discover that the Kremlin so finely tuned its moves to exploit the superstitious twinges of the West (perhaps as an echo of the Pumpkin Papers in the Hiss case?). We hope no brooder over a crystal ball in Moscow finds in the day and date chosen for Laird's first Pentagon press conference a similarly ingenious way to frighten the U.S.S.R.**

Is There A Psychiatrist In The House?

Nightmare Argument For Endless Arms Race

"Present deterrence rests squarely on American nuclear superiority. On the day that the Soviet Union feels there is, indeed, a balance of power, it will move forward aggressively at multiples of her present pace. On that day, nuclear war will become not only thinkable but in all likelihood inevitable. On that day we will not be losing the so-called cold war; we will have lost it. Hot wars will lie ahead, negotiated surrender to Soviet expansion.

"Just as our superiority today gives us, in a realistic view, the shield behind which to press the cause of freedom, Soviet superiority or even parity tomorrow would give them the ultimate shield behind which to press the cause of the world's communization. We can rest assured that the Communists, given such a shield, would not look upon nuclear war as suicidal or as an exercise in blind mass destruction. They would look upon it first as a means to advance Communism, and finally as the way of opening the last stage in destruction of freedom—military occupation of the United States."

—p. 51 Laird's book on America's Strategy Gap

Laird's Argument For Giving Nuclear Arms to France and West Germany

"The third step necessary for a strategy of initiative would be to arm our NATO allies with defensive nuclear weapons, under proper controls. If West Germany and France could use defensive nuclear weapons, Khrushchev's strategy to disrupt NATO would at once suffer a major defeat. Khrushchev knows this, and is making every possible effort to prevent us from extending the power of the nuclear deterrent to our allies. And the present Administration shows every indication of cooperation.

"President Kennedy seems unwilling to contradict Khrushchev even by giving nuclear arms to General de Gaulle. It is a peculiar anomaly when a great nation refuses to its friends the military secrets already long since stolen by their common enemy. The fact is that Khrushchev's nuclear blackmail strategy which he uses to terrify Europe would be shattered if we 'nuclearized' our allies. . . . Nuclear deterrent in the hands of our allies would be a great help to us. It would provide us with a bargaining weapon for insisting, in return, that they meet our conventional force requirements. . . . France and Britain would no longer have an excuse for withholding funds that should go into their own conventional shield and putting them into nuclear development instead—development that we could give them. . . .*

"The fears played up by Soviet propaganda that such a weapons grant would allow the possibility of military adventures by, say, West Germany, are unreasonable and totally without recognition of the facts." Here a footnote says "During a recent breakfast at which I entertained the German Ambassador to Washington, he clearly indicated that his country understood this and that such control of nuclear weapons could be worked out."

—From Pages 86-89 of Melvin Laird's A House Divided: America's Strategy Gap (Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1962)

***Henry A. Kissinger, in "The Unsolved Problems of European Defense" (*Foreign Affairs*, July 1962) makes an excellent case in an examination of the need for European nuclear defense. [Footnote in the Laird book].**

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threats [our italics] to the peace with force if required", including nuclear weapons. This implies first strike and preventive war. Negotiation in this context becomes another form of dictation through intimidation.

The Apocalyptic Right

The full significance of the Laird appointment becomes clearer if one goes back and has a fresh look at the kind of men on the task forces which prepared Nixon's position papers on defense and foreign policy. These were heavily weighted with the military and apocalyptic rightists. The task force on national security "was made up primarily," *Congressional Quarterly* noted in a study Dec. 4 which predicts a sharp rise in military spending under Nixon, "of military and civilian officials associated with the 'massive retaliation' doctrine of the 1950s and members of Congress who favor a 'tough' military line." Many of them are men whom Laird salutes as his mentors in his book—Admirals Arleigh Burke and Arthur Radford on the defense task force and on the foreign policy task force Professor Robert Strausz-Hupé of the University of Pennsylvania and Prof. Gerhart Niemeyer of Notre Dame, both mighty Druids in the dark forests of geopolitics. Other kindred spirits on the defense task force were Craig Hosmer, Dr. Edward Teller's faithful mouthpiece on the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, and Senator Tower of Texas. On the foreign policy task force, just to keep it from slipping too far left, were also Robert Amory, who lost his job as deputy director of the CIA in the wake of the Bay of Pigs; Robert C. Hill who distinguished himself as Eisenhower's last Ambassador in Mexico by indiscreet relations with the right-wing *Sinarquistas;* Prof. David N. Rowe of Yale and Walter Judd. The last two have been as stalwart as Mao himself, though on the other side, in resisting revisionism in America's China policy.

These task forces and their composition do not fit that mask of moderation the Nixon public relations strategy has fashioned for his debut. Any idea that the work of these Republican troglodytes on defense and foreign policy can be dismissed as a mere campaign exercise will be dispelled by a closer look at Laird's record, his book and his associations. He is one of them. Along with Henry A. Kissinger, the new White House foreign affairs expert, and Kissinger's deputy, Richard V. Allen, Nixon's foreign affairs expert during the campaign, they belong to a closely knit mutual admiration society. The accolade from Kissinger's colleagues of the Harvard liberal establishment on his appointment as Nixon's mentor has served to distract attention from his less well-known but more significant ties with these right-wingers. Laird's book is complimentary in its references to Kissinger as it is to Niemeyer and Strausz-Hupé. Laird told the *Washington Star* in a full length interview Dec. 18 that in 1964, as chairman of the Republican Platform committee, "he relied more heavily on the views of Henry Kissinger than those of Barry Goldwater," while Allen in an interview with the *New York Times* Dec. 14 disclosed that during the Nixon campaign he "maintained discreet contact with Dr. Kissinger, then foreign policy adviser to Governor Rockefeller." Such political dexterity must be close to genius.

Laird in his book also acknowledges the inspiration of David M. Abshire who, with Allen, edited a huge 1,000-page right-wing symposium on *National Security: Political, Military and Economic Strategies in the Decade Ahead* (Praeger: 1963) for the Georgetown Center for Strategic Studies and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. Allen himself moved from the first to the second and is now on leave to the White House. The volume carries an introduction by another of Laird's heroes, Admiral Burke. Among the contributors are Kissinger, along with such seers as Herman Kahn, Edward Teller, Senator Jackson and Walt Rostow. When Allen three years later published a study for the American Bar Association "Peace or Peaceful Co-Existence?", Laird praised it in the *Congressional Record* (Aug. 26, 1966) as proving "conclusively" from a study of 3,000 Communist documents (no less!) that co-existence was only a more deceitful way of seeking world domination through "a many-pronged offensive". This is back to the bogeyman view of

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Toward More and Bigger Vietnams

"We must accept the moral responsibility to use our power constructively to prevent Communism from destroying the heritage of our world civilization. In terms of military strategy, this means closing the strategy gap by taking the initiative in all areas. While we have the power we must aim at confronting the enemy directly. We can win every such confrontation."

—pps. 176-7 Laird on America's Strategy Gap

Laird And Kissinger Look Pleasing As A Team to Military-Industrial-Space Complex

"Appointment of Rep. Melvin R. Laird (R. Wis.) as Defense Secretary-designate clears the way for a MAJOR EXAMINATION OF PENTAGON POLICIES, FROM WEAPON SYSTEMS CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT TO PROCUREMENT POLICIES. Rep. Laird was a vociferous critic of the way the Defense Dept. was operated by McNamara, often concentrating his attacks on what he considered to be misuse of cost-effectiveness studies.

"On questions of national defense policy, REP. LAIRD IS BASICALLY IN AGREEMENT WITH THE STRONG-DEFENSE, STRONG-OFFENSE IDEAS OF PROF. HENRY A. KISSINGER, named by Nixon as chief national security adviser. Rep. Laird's views also tend to coincide with those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But Congressional sources say that he will be a stickler for maintaining strict civilian control over the military. The first indication of how he plans to operate will come later this month when he picks his civilian service chiefs, a series of choices in which Nixon has pledged to take only an advisory role . . .

"Rep. Laird's presence in the Nixon cabinet will affect the future of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He favors a FAR BIGGER MILITARY ROLE IN SPACE, EMPHASIZING MANNED MISSIONS, WITH FUNDING TO BE TAKEN FROM NASA'S CIVILIAN SPACE PROGRAM IF NECESSARY. In this he reflects not only the view of Nixon but that of a growing body of legislators.

"Although Nixon's science adviser, Dr. Lee A. DuBridge, will have formal responsibility for finding and recommending a new NASA Administrator, the selection may be heavily influenced by the views of Rep. Laird. HE IS NOT FULLY IN AGREEMENT WITH DuBRIDGE ON PRIORITIES FOR THE U.S. SPACE PROGRAM. One possible upshot: NASA's Apollo Applications program, already a victim of low funding, could be terminated and its objectives tied to the Air Force's Manned Orbital Laboratory program."

—Washington Roundup: Aviation Week & Space Technology, *December 16, emphasis in original.*

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A Secretary of Defense Who Wants A Higher Goal Than "Mere Survival"

(*Continued From Page Three*)

the 50s. Laird, Kissinger and Allen will prove a formidable team in fashioning foreign policy.

Prongs or Tentacles

Whether prongs or tentacles, Laird sees them everywhere. His world-view, like that of Niemeyer and Strausz-Hupé is equally compounded of demonology and melodrama. During the hearings on the fiscal 1966 budget in March, 1965, when the bombings of North Vietnam had just begun, Laird told McNamara (p. 121, Pt. 3 House appropriations hearings), "I think there is a good possibility that we will have a breakout under Communist pressure in some other place in the world within the next 6 or 7 weeks. It seems that the Communists operate this way. At the time of the missiles to Cuba, Red China attacked India. At the time of the Bay of Tonkin, that incident, when we were completely diverted on the situation taking place in the Vietnamese war, the Communist-backed rebels marched and took over Stanleyville [in the Congo], which was a very strategic place." It takes a wide-angle vision to link together in one cosmic plot the Cuban missile crisis, the Indo-Chinese border war, the Tonkin Gulf bombings and the rebellion in the Congo.

Had Laird been Secretary of Defense in the past eight years, history might have been very different. He thinks we should not have backed away at the Bay of Pigs. He sees Rostow as naive, Rusk as soft and McNamara as a positive menace. He believes President Kennedy made a cardinal mistake when he said we would never strike first. He advocates a policy of nuclear reprisal along the lines of "a policy called 2X" which he says Dulles considered in the 50s. This would involve a steady escalation in nuclear reprisal to "the point at which the cost to the enemy would outweigh the gain" and show him that aggression was "unprofitable". Though an opponent of McNamara's cost effectiveness approach, Laird seems to have a touching faith that such reprisals would lead an enemy calmly to sit down and balance gains against losses and decide that crime doesn't pay, like a business man soberly contemplating a poor investment.

Something of this approach is evident in Laird's own shift away from support of Johnson in the Vietnam war. Laird began to lose enthusiasm after Johnson in the Johns Hopkins speech announced a readiness to negotiate. Laird has no faith in the Saigon regime and believes the Communists will take over if our troops pull out. This is also the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which would like (from distant echoes we have picked up) to keep a garrison force of U.S. troops there indefinitely. They may find Laird easy to convince. Laird warns in his book that past mistakes have been due to our failure to listen to the military in political discussions. He describes the military as "highly intelligent citizens with a broad grasp of our military potential and future needs . . . well-equipped to make meaningful recommendations for policy." There is no trace in this description of that astringent eye required to keep the military within bounds.

Not to examine Laird's views and record fully in the hearings and the confirmation debate would be a gross neglect of Senatorial duty. If the appointment cannot be blocked, at least the country should be put on notice what it may expect. Laird at one point suggested in the House that the Peace Corps be renamed the Freedom Corps because "freedom is the important issue" and "mere survival under peace is not the important message we wish to deliver to the world." To confirm Laird as Secretary of Defense is to risk the likelihood that in the next four years the Pentagon's course will be set on higher goals than "mere survival." *Noon, Dec. 19*

More For Arms, Less For The Poor

"A stable, growing economy is essential to our sustained military effort in the cold war and our position of economic leadership in the world. A flight from the dollar will lead to an overwhelming Communist victory, equal economically to loss of United States leadership in the free world. The present profit squeeze will create increasing unemployment, jeopardize technological leadership and hinder economic growth. A major overhaul of the tax system is mandatory; otherwise we shall face a serious collapse of the economy. It is essential to establish economic priorities to win the cold war, to give first priorities to the national security budget, and to spend on non-defense only amounts which will not injure the stability of the dollar. THIS IS A SACRIFICE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BE WILLING TO MAKE." [Emphasis added].

—*p. 178 Laird's* House Divided.

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